

# MOVED TO ACTION



## Standards for Museums

*The new standards for implementing UNDRIP and supporting Indigenous self-determination in museums.*

1. The return of cultural belongings is to occur with the full involvement of the appropriate Indigenous peoples as equal partners, with research and funding capacity coming from museums at every step.
2. The categories of belongings considered for repatriation includes not only ancestral remains and cultural belongings, but also associated information, such as the results of research, photographs, works of art, maps, archival documents, songs, plants, seeds, language recordings, digital material, and any other information related to the traditional knowledge, cultures, histories, and intellectual property of Indigenous peoples.
3. The recognition that Indigenous peoples have intellectual sovereignty over all material created by or about them. This includes the right to know about these belongings and connected traditional knowledge or intangible heritage, as well as the right to control access to these.
4. Knowing that in many cases the period of duress begins with contact and continues today, consider the impact this has on the provenance of your collections and related repatriation practices.
5. Except in circumstances where alternative stewardship measures are advised and agreed upon by the Indigenous rights holders, in no way should alternatives to repatriation be imposed or take the place of formal repatriation processes.
6. It must be left to Indigenous rights holders on how to best care for or lay to rest the items that have been repatriated. Recognize that this varies according to context and Nation-specific cultural protocols.
7. Ensure that repatriation policies enable museum staff to proactively act regarding repatriations, which includes the development of clear and enforceable processes. Actions proposed by professionals must be respected and supported by the institution's administration.
8. Approach resolution to overlapping claims in a manner that does not put the onus back on Indigenous Nations by providing research capacity, funding support, and assisting as a facilitator where appropriate.
9. Ensure that UNDRIP compliance is the responsibility of all museum departments and reflected in all museum experiences, including outreach and engagement activities.
10. Museums need to ensure an environment free of discrimination and built on understanding, dignity and respect.
11. Develop hiring policies and practices that take Indigenous knowledge, experience, scholarship, and community relationships into account in areas of recruitment, evaluation, and compensation as essential pieces to decolonizing museum operations.
12. Incorporate into the job description relevant ways that Indigenous knowledge, skills and perspectives are important for success in the role.
13. All policies, operational practices and mandates must support the recognition of Indigenous peoples' human rights and self-determination.
14. Regarding access to collections, recognize Indigenous peoples as rights holders when it comes to accessing and stewarding their belongings. This requires co-development of methods of access and care of belongings that are defined by the Indigenous communities themselves. This may mean repatriation or stewardship.
15. Engagement and partnerships with Indigenous Nations must centre and support the needs and interests of Indigenous communities as identified by communities, while at the same time take the onus off Indigenous partners and communities.
16. In all areas of the institution, museums need to think beyond the simple engagement/consultation framework that has come to be the standard approach for these partnerships.
17. De-prioritize institutional timelines and respect the amount of time relationship building takes on the part of the community. As Indigenous community members are often tasked with labour involved with relationship building, this time and labour must be recognized and compensated by institutions.
18. Bring museum engagement and partnership activities beyond formal museum space by taking themselves to the community with whom they want to engage.
19. For projects and activities that require longer partnership commitments, trade "one-off" single task engagement or event-based honorariums in favour of creating positions for Indigenous experts.
20. All knowledge and intellectual property must be properly credited, and all outcomes provided back to the Indigenous communities. Regarding intellectual property associated with exhibits, Indigenous communities ultimately own and control the depiction of their peoples and their stories, have authority over the creative process, and are best able to interpret the historical narrative to match their conceptual understandings and epistemologies.
21. Exhibits, programming, and educational material must properly cite Indigenous knowledge and recognize community knowledge. For exhibits, this must be at the same level as curatorial, programming, and interpretive staff.
22. Ensure the proper use of terminology including names for Nations, communities, clans, families, and place names, throughout museum spaces, as well as archives and collections, as discussed in the Repatriation and Collections section. Use appropriate orthography or syllabics.
23. Develop meaningful Indigenous governance with decision-making authority, not simply advisory bodies.
24. Executive, governing and advisory boards of cultural institutions in Canada must be restructured to include more Indigenous participation and management.
25. Museums must understand the different decision-making processes and authoritative structures present within their institutions that perpetuate and impose systemic institutional barriers.
26. Museums must reconsider where and how colonial authority is reinforced through governance.
27. Museum executives and board members must take a leadership role in self-educating on Indigenous matters while recognizing the limits of their contribution.
28. Establishing Indigenous advisory for your museum means weaving together systems of governance and giving advisors clear and decisive decision-making power.
29. Use Indigenous-driven systems of evaluation and assessment to measure success of this work.
30. Outside of the museum, museums should proactively support Indigenous-led cultural heritage organizations, cultural centres, and museums.